

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





Reserve  
aQL60  
.054  
1995

s  
of

ce

h, and  
Staff

Washington, D.C.

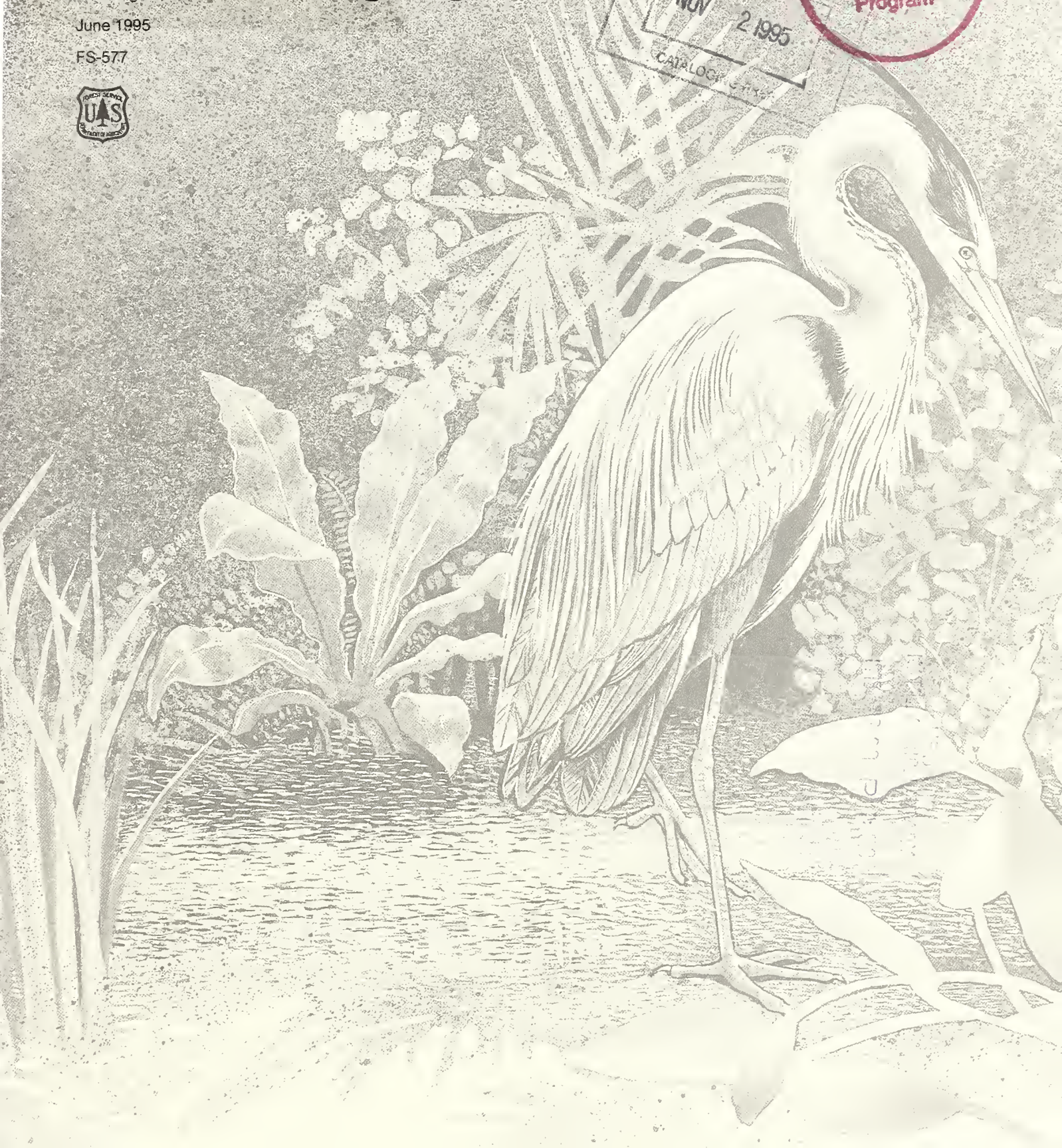
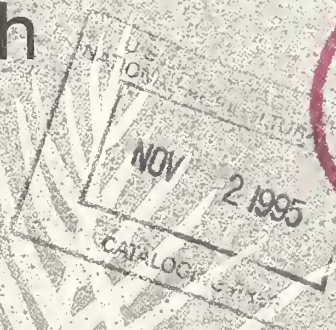
June 1995

FS-577

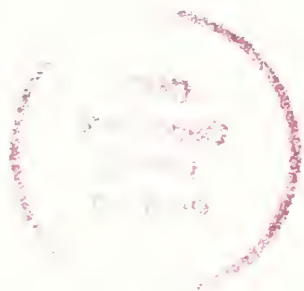


# On The Right Track: NatureWatch Highlights

GPO  
Depository  
Library  
Program







## On The Right Track: NatureWatch Highlights

For wildlife watchers everywhere, this logo has come to mean adventure ahead. For those of us in the NatureWatch program, it's a sign that something new is happening in the Forest Service—a new way of caring for the land and serving all its inhabitants. Six years ago, the Forest Service's Deputy Chief urged us to "step boldly forward and become leaders in the world of wildlife viewing, photography, and nature study." We took that to heart, and, with the help of newfound allies, our tentative first steps have grown to a gallop. The NatureWatch umbrella now covers not only Eyes on Wildlife but also Celebrating Wildflowers and FishWatch.

As part of our planning for the future of NatureWatch, we've decided to revisit our beginnings, recount our accomplishments, and follow the binoculars to a few sites and programs we're most excited about. We invite you to join the adventure ahead.



## A National Passion

No one would travel halfway across the country to see grass grow. But to see native grass, pollinated by wild bees, planted by songbirds, parted by sage grouse, and devoured by elk—now that, as they say in Wyoming, is worth the watching. People's passion for viewing and photographing native animals, plants, and fish grows greater each year. In 1994, 33.4 million visits were made to the national forests just to view wildlife, resulting in \$869 million in public benefits. Estimates say that we can expect four times as many visits in 2040.

As access to private land dwindles and habitats become stressed, people are clamoring for more chances to view wildlife in their native habitat and more interpretive materials to help them understand what they are seeing. They want a window into the national forests, a way to learn about the life that sways, scurries, swims, and soars here. We opened just such a window in 1989, and 6 years later, it's a remarkable program called NatureWatch.

NatureWatch puts people in touch with the plants, animals, fish, and birds of their national forests through viewing sites, interpretive walks, festivals, and more. We've worked to create a feast for the senses, an effortless education, and a way for people who feel strongly about biodiversity to become partners in habitat conservation.

It all started in 1989 with Eyes on Wildlife, the terrestrial component of NatureWatch. Since that time, NatureWatch has grown to include plant, fish, and even insect watching as well as bird and animal watching. Thanks to the synergy of partnerships and our philosophy of encouraging people in the field to follow their instincts, the program's been, if you'll excuse the pun, a howling success. At more than 450 viewing sites nationwide, we are now reaching diverse audiences, celebrating diverse forms of life in diverse habitats, and building a constituency of caring people who are aware of the importance of ecosystems and what it takes to keep them whole and healthy.

## A Growing Partnership

NatureWatch fans are doing more than just cheering from the sidelines, however. They are in the arena with us, building facilities, volunteering as interpreters, donating dollars, suggesting new sites, and then advertising them as part of their "see our country first" campaigns. Sites that become vacation destinations or festival centerpieces are a point of pride for local communities and a tonic for forest-based economies. As a bonus, we're working with groups we've previously not had the pleasure of knowing, and the ripples of cooperation are spreading.

## A New Audience

NatureWatch allows us to touch a whole new network of wildlife enthusiasts. Truckers on the interstate are raving about the roadside wildflower exhibits; rural schoolchildren can't wait for the migratory bird trunk to land in town; hearing-impaired kids are spotting tiny warblers for the first time with the help of expert birders; hundreds are calling the wild hotline—an 800 number publicizing "bloom alerts" and wildflower events around the Nation; photographers in wheelchairs are catching loons in action from an accessible viewing blind; and even the squeamish are coming out for weekly bog walks (bring boots!). Communities have found that hailing the return of migrating wildlife is a great way to celebrate the seasons and express pride in their bioregion. Entire festivals now revolve around the drama of spawning salmon or the colorful return of neotropical migratory birds to the national forests.

For the already avid, those who have traditionally taken their spotting scopes only to national parks and wildlife refuges, NatureWatch has become a reason to check out the public lands next door. Folks are finding that national forests have



Photo credit: Laura Mitchell

166 million acres of spectacular and relatively untamed habitat for more than 3,000 plant and animal species, from glacier lilies to grizzlies. They are definitely worth a look!

## A Changing Forest Service

We're also acquainting people with who we are as an agency. Walk leaders or workshop speakers are likely to be staff hydrologists, biologists, herpetologists, sociologists, or archeologists, professions that the public may not have associated with our agency. As we explain what we do, we have a chance to introduce people to the principles of ecosystem management. Then, since showing is always better than telling, we can suggest a visit to a watchable wildlife site that brings the story to life.

Ecosystem management is also about listening to people's needs. The education that takes place at a viewing site is a two-way street, because people who attend our viewing walks or talks are able to tell us, face-to-face, what's important to them. Sometimes, a visit to a site will give them the language they need to communicate about ecosystems. They may learn, for instance, why it's important to maintain a diversity of age classes, or how erosion control upstream can translate into a vibrant fishery downstream. Once people make these connections, they know why protection, enhancement, and restoration is needed, and may even want to be involved in our efforts to rejuvenate damaged areas.

## On the Right Track

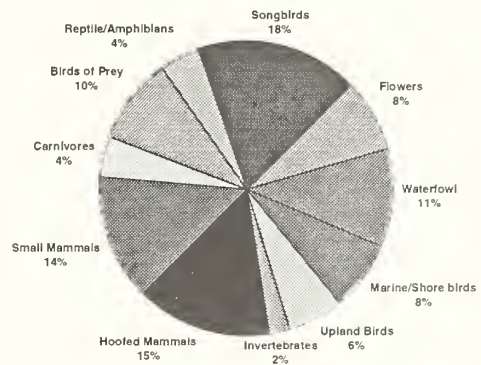
In ways we couldn't have predicted 6 years ago, NatureWatch has proven to be good for our forest-based communities; good for the wildlife and wildflowers, and fish we are celebrating; and a vehicle for two-way communication with the public—a support beam in our ecosystem management endeavor. NatureWatch is definitely on the right track.

## Accomplishments

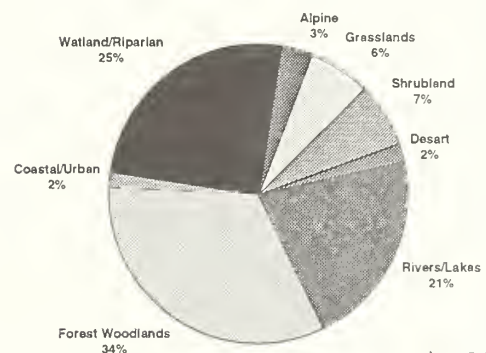
Diversity has been the NatureWatch word. We've worked hard to make our sites accessible and appealing to people of all physical abilities, backgrounds, and interests. We've let a diversity of species and habitat types share the spotlight, from butterflies on bogs to grizzlies on glaciers. And we've offered a wide menu of interpretive approaches, from storytelling circles to snorkeling trips.

All in all, we've created an astounding 468 watchable wildlife viewing sites, and helped publicize many of them in 19 State viewing guides. International guides are on the drawing board for coming years. While breaking ground for even more sites, we've put environmental education and habitat conservation into high gear — producing more and better quality interpretive materials, school curricula, and trip programming, as well as more seminars, guided tours, and one-on-one contact with interpreters. Two

Viewing Site Featured Species\*



Viewing Site Ecosystem\*



\* 1993





Photo credit: Swanson

hundred and fifty full-time employees are currently assigned to interpretation.

In everything we do, our goal has been to educate people about the vital link between wildlife survival and habitat, and build a broad base of public support for doing the right thing. People who want to be involved now have a way to become NatureWatch partners, contributing dollars or volunteering their time and expertise. As you can see in the following accomplishments, their help has made all the difference.

### Sights on Success

- In the National Strategic Plan for Eyes on Wildlife, we articulated our mission and mapped our course for the next 5 years. Since then, we've welcomed aboard Fishwatch and Celebrating Wildflowers, creating a fully integrated NatureWatch Program.
- We hired a full-time NatureWatch Coordinator who is working closely with all major partners.



Photo credit: Laura Mitchell

- We developed interpretive plans for entire forests and significant wildlife areas. This big-picture planning allowed us to integrate ecological themes across a geographical area, tie into other Federal and State wildlife programs, and expand rather than duplicate viewing opportunities.
- We added NatureWatch to the Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plant Management System, the account reporting system. This allows us to track projects and identify gaps we need to fill to reach our goal of addressing all animal groups, communities, Recreation Opportunity Spectrums, interpretive techniques, and user groups in NatureWatch programming.
- In fiscal years 1995 and 1996, we'll be evaluating our programs, including the Viewing Guide Series, to see just how well we are reaching and motivating visitors to become better conservationists.

### Reaching a Broad Audience

- More than 12 million visitors enjoy National Forest and Grassland interpretive programs (e.g., exhibits, guided walks, and audiovisual programs) each year. This visitation occurs at the 55 major visitor facilities as well as at some of the partnership programs in resorts, lodges, cruise ships, trains, and other locations on or adjacent to the national forests. Additional informal interpretation occurs at the more than 1,000 Forest Service offices across the country.





- Through on-site programs, we were able to connect with and educate wildlife watchers—a user group normally scattered throughout the forest and difficult to reach.
- Our off-site programs—airport, fair, and museum exhibits; school programs; and so forth—reached people who might not normally visit the national forests.
- We brought attention to a little-known facet of Forest Service work: the study and protection of nongame, threatened, and sensitive plants and animals. We were also able to tell people about our Service-wide commitment to ecosystem management.

## Interpretation and Education

- We developed sample Wildlife Viewing Area Fact Sheets (similar to Recreation Opportunity Guide Sheets) that forests can customize and distribute to visitors. Alaska has taken the idea and run with it, developing fact sheets for all of their viewing sites.
- Working with partners, we led the way in developing State-sanctioned lesson plans that use wildlife viewing sites to teach kids hands-on science and to generate interest in natural ecosystems.

### Wildlife Viewing Area



#### Suntaheen Creek Fishpass

**Description** The interpretive site is located adjacent to a waterfall barrier on Suntaheen Creek. A viewing platform allows visitors to look down into an aluminum Alaska fishpass ladder. Signs explain how and why fishpasses are built. A native cedar plank trail takes visitors to another viewing platform with additional signs surprising salmon life history and the importance of large woody debris to their survival. Spawning pink (humpback), chum (dog), and coho (silver) salmon may be seen in the creek, along with the occasional brown bear fishing for lunch.

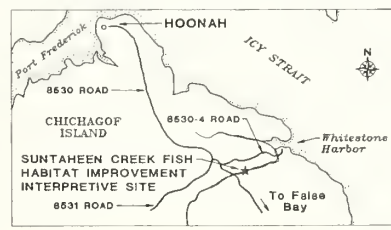
#### Recommended Season:

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
	•••••	•••••	

**Directions** From Hoonah drive east out of town on Forest Service Road 8502 2.5 miles to the intersection with the 8530 road. Turn left and travel 12.5 miles. The loop road into the site is signed.

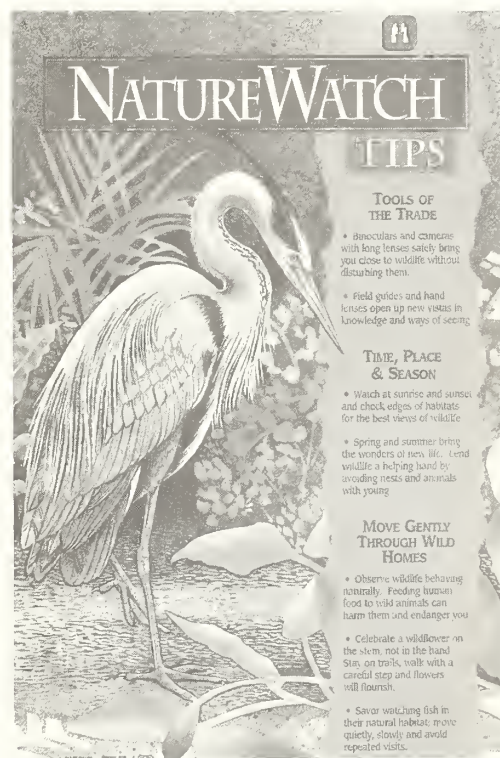
**Viewing Opportunities:** Look for salmon in the creek. Spawning salmon dig nests (redds) in the gravel with their tails. Did you know that large pieces of wood play a very important role in the life of salmon by providing cover and holding gravel for spawning? Do not disturb spawning salmon. They are providing the next generation of salmon for commercial, sport, and subsistence users, as well as the continued run of fish in the stream.

This fishpass ladder, and another one further upstream, allow salmon to swim over waterfalls to



## Wildlife Viewing Education

- By encouraging audiences to watch from a particular site (a safe distance from wildlife) and teaching viewing etiquette, we worked to curb habitat trampling and wildlife disturbance.
- We developed a behavior-watching brochure that puts responsible wildlife viewing practices in a positive light, i.e., it says the ultimate viewing experience is to see an animal without it seeing or being disturbed by you.
- We developed a NatureWatch Tips Poster that puts viewing ethics in living color, perfect for fair booths, trailheads, partners' offices, and homes.



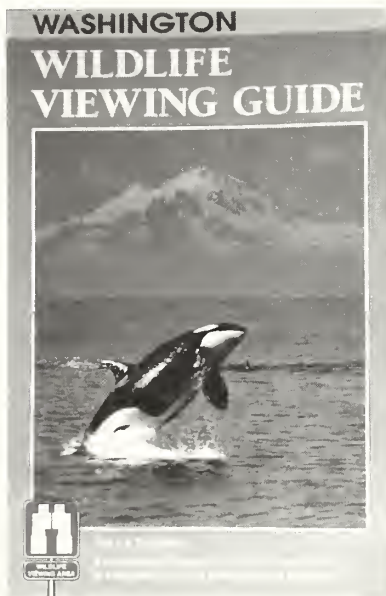
## Rural Economic Revitalization

- In our Rural Economic Development partnerships (e.g., Choteau, Montana, and Cordova, Alaska), we demonstrated that watchable wildlife tourism can bring in revenue without depleting resources. Nature-based festivals, for instance, are great for community pride and economic health. As more communities notice their neighbors benefiting from ecotourism, we receive more

requests for festival seed money, autotours, interpretive centers, and viewing sites.

## Partnerships

- We worked from a truly diversified funding base—including \$2.4 million in cooperative funds for the years 1991-1994. The three-fold increase in cooperative dollars from 1991 to 1994 shows a clear measure of support for the NatureWatch concept, both within the Forest Service and among our partners and the public.
- We played a lead role in the production of 19 State wildlife viewing guides. Currently, 43 percent of all Americans reside in States that have a wildlife viewing guide. We're working on 11 more guides, and through partnerships, we hope to produce 20 additional State viewing guides and up to 4 international guides during FY 1995 and FY 1996.



- The Forest Service investment of \$0.8 million toward the viewing guides has leveraged another \$1.7 million from other Federal, State, nonprofit, and for profit partners during the last 4 years.

- We produced a national slide show, an award-winning color brochure, and a Great Blue Heron art poster to generate enthusiasm for watchable wildlife and invite partners to get involved.
- State tourism agencies are 100 percent behind us. Case in point: pick up the latest Montana and California highway maps and you'll see a new addition—binocular symbols marking all sites in the Viewing Guides!
- Fifty-eight interpretive associations have agreements signed with the Forest Service to produce and distribute interpretive and educational sales items on over 125 national forests.

## Training and Outreach

- We developed "In Focus—A Practical Guide to Watchable Wildlife Programs." It's a resource-packed handbook that explains, step by step, how to set up a NatureWatch program on a forest.
- We conducted three National Watchable Wildlife Conferences, two national training sessions, and a host of regional training sessions that emphasized partnership skills, program and site design, and interpretation.
- We held three National Wildlife Viewing Achievement Award ceremonies to reward programs that emphasize diversity, education, lively interpretation, and ethical viewing practices.





## Regional Highlights

### Northern Region

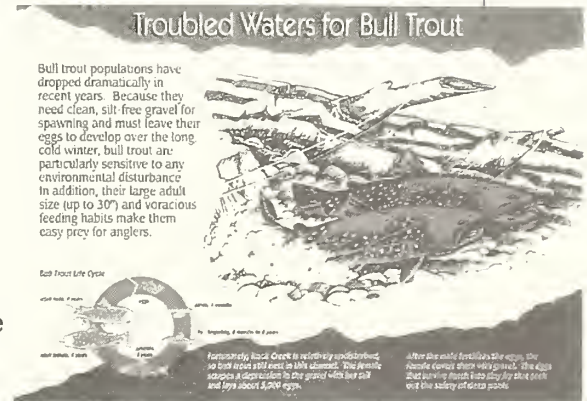
#### *Watchable Wildlife Specialist, Idaho*

If it's good for wildlife, let the walls between agencies come tumbling down! To pool our talents and avoid duplicating efforts, the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Bureau of Land Management cooperated to pay the salary of one Watchable Wildlife Specialist. This sensible arrangement has led to some sensational projects. Beth Paragamian's duties include generating interest among potential partners and visitors, and orchestrating the development of viewing sites. She also designs and delivers education programs, coordinates special events, and writes articles, newsletters, and scripts that create a "buzz" about wildlife watching on the national forests. To reach people who don't come directly to the sites, she distributes learning materials to forest interpreters, museum personnel, and teachers, while ensuring that NatureWatch programs are on display at fairs, festivals, and large public events. Having an on-site specialist gives the public "live" interpretive contact, and keeps the program visible. Ultimately, the resource benefits; each time a person is affected by something the Watchable Wildlife Specialist says, conservation becomes a personal issue.



#### *Rock Creek Interpretive Trail, Lolo National Forest, Montana*

From a bull trout's point of view, swimming the crystal waters of Rock Creek is like getting to heaven early. But Rock Creek's charm is more than fish-deep. The Rock Creek ecosystem teems with life, from creekbed to cottonwood canopy, and that makes it a great place for a riparian interpretation. The goal of the streamside trail, built with Challenge Cost Share funding and a grant from a local citizens advisory council, is to give visitors enough information to answer the question "What



makes Rock Creek such a great place for bull trout and other wildlife?" The answer? Clean water; a balance of riffles, runs, and pools; woody debris; aquatic insects; creekside vegetation; flooding and nutrient cycling; and the interactions of hundreds of plants and animals, including humans. It's a message Rock Creek's 35,000 visitors can carry with them to just about any stream they visit.

#### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Northern Region*

Isaac Dog Eagle tells of a ceremony that Plains Indians perform when choosing a plant for medicinal purposes. "We ask the plants to help us heal, and we are careful not to step on them; we believe that the plants must not be disturbed by humans or their powers of healing will be taken away." It's a message that tour organizers at the Little Missouri National Grasslands were glad to hear.



Respect for the wonders and powers of plants was a major theme of the Celebrating Wildflowers Initiative kicked off in 1994 by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service to trumpet the value and beauty of plants on the 550 million acres of land managed by the three agencies. Dog Eagle's 2-hour class in medicinal plants drew a large crowd, as have the wildflower walks and seminars conducted in other parts of the Region.

Idaho wildflower walkers are provided with a brochure featuring drawings of native wildflowers—one for each season. The brochures talk about the ecological niche that the plants play as well as the niche they have played in human lives. Visitors are discouraged from picking the wildflowers, but cheered when they pluck out noxious exotics such as Knapweed. The walks, conducted in cooperation with the local chapters of the Native Plant Society, often feature a volunteer tour guide whose infectious passion for plants transforms casual plant fanciers into real fans.

—Edible and  
Medicinal—  
**Plants**  
of  
North Idaho



—Early Spring—  
**Wildflowers**  
of  
North Idaho



—Summer—  
**Wildflowers**  
of  
North Idaho

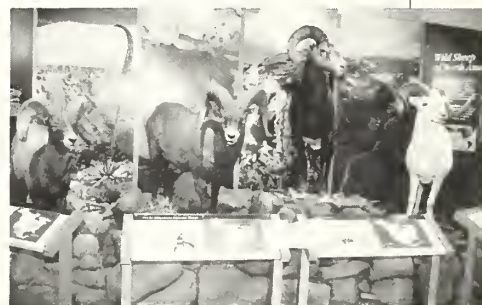


## Rocky Mountain Region

### *National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center, Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming*

Wyoming's totem animal is the bighorn sheep, roamer and leaper of the State's steep, remote crags. At Whiskey Mountain, however, America's largest bighorn sheep herd roams in surprisingly close proximity to humans, in part because of our effort to bring the herd back. The story of the herd's extinction, reintroduction, and resurgence is told at the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center in Dubois. The visitor center, just southwest of Yellowstone, is a dream realized by the cooperative efforts of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the town of Dubois, and numerous other individuals and organizations.

Visitors to the center can immerse themselves in the world of the bighorn, viewing life-size exhibits about biology, predator-prey relationships, plant communities,



and the Sheepeater Indians of the Wind River Range. They can then test their newfound knowledge by booking a guided tour into sheep habitat for an up-close glimpse of this magnificent animal. At day's end, visitors leave with a hopeful feeling about how people working together can make a safe place for wildlife in today's world.

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Rocky Mountain Region*

The townspeople of Crested Butte, Colorado, think their wildflowers are tops. Together with the Gunnison National Forest, they sponsored a festival that drew 775 people (great for a first year) for tours, lectures, and instruction in wildflower photography, drawing, and painting. Further north, in

South Dakota, visitors to the Black Hills National Forest Visitor Center have no trouble identifying "What's in Bloom," thanks to a lobby display of color-coded live and mounted specimens. The "Roadside Attractions" exhibit helps visitors determine those plants that are natives and those that are exotics, which often compete with native communities. And that's just the tip of the first-year growth of wildflower celebrations—wildflower awareness is blooming just about everywhere in the Rocky Mountain Region!

## Southwest Region

### *Forest Bat Display, Coronado National Forest, Arizona*

Click-click-click-click...just imagine if you could turn up the dial on a "bat interpreter" and suddenly eavesdrop on bat navigation and conversation. Visitors to Cave Creek Visitors Center in Douglas, Arizona, were able to do just that, thanks to a guided tour

led by Forest Service scientists from the Southwest Forest Experiment Station in Portal, Arizona. The tour was part of the national forest's efforts, in cooperation with the Bat Conservation International, to introduce people to the cave's most illustrious but maligned residents. Like the bat, the display is designed to travel and pique interest

wherever it goes; it has light-up answers, flip-up displays, and in-depth narratives for those who want to know more. Five thousand people toured the bat display in 1993, learning how to "observe, not disturb," and even how to construct houses that would attract bats (which eat 500 mosquitoes in an evening!) to their backyards.



### *Monzana Mountain Hawk Watch, Cibola National Forest, New Mexico*

Most people would jump at the chance to help their favorite wildlife species. Visitors to Monzana Mountain are given that opportunity daily in September and October when they are invited to help count hawks as part of a nationwide census. Volunteers from the nonprofit HawkWatch International are on hand to help beginners learn identification and something about the ecological connections between hawks and their environment. Hawk numbers are more than just a curiosity. A decreasing raptor population is often a sign that toxins or other pollutants are reaching critical concentrations. And as the hawks go, the hawk counters will learn, so go our ecosystems.

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Southwest Region*

The Southwest Region writes to say "Come on down, the summer monsoons have been great this year and there's an abundance of late summer composites and mountain wildflowers galore!" Thanks to the efforts of some enthusiastic Forest Service botanists and NatureWatch coordinators, you can catch a bloom no matter when you visit the southwestern national forests. Certain districts on the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico conduct wildflower hikes every week of the summer. Early in September, the City of Las Vegas hosts a Wildflower Festival, and, at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History, you can see the Forest Service-produced "Rare Beauty—America's Endangered Plants" exhibit year-round. Museum goers also flock to evening programs on Growing Natives, Endangered Plants of New Mexico, and something all dryland communities could use—a course in Xeriscaping. Meanwhile, the Gila National Forest is showing off its natural xeriscaping during tours of its 30-year restoration projects—overgrazed valleys now carpeted in wildflowers and grasses. The contrast between the photos of hammered lands and the splendor of the restored areas is sure to leave a powerful impression on all who visit.



## **Intermountain Region**

### *Discovery Bird and Fish Watching Trail, Uinta and Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Utah*

"It's something you'd see on National Geographic," says one visitor watching hundreds of Kokanee salmon spawn in Utah's Strawberry River, a few footsteps away from the viewing trail. At the end of the trail, visitors watch as State employees collect eggs from Bear Lake cutthroat for fish hatcheries around the State. They are also likely to witness research techniques that allow the biologists to keep tabs on the growth and health of the fish coming in from the Strawberry River. The major bellwether of fish health is the condition of riparian areas, which visitors can examine in a set of before and after photographs taken during the process of streamside restoration. The ravages of overuse are clear, as are the examples of how humans can help rebuild ecosystem processes so they will sustain fish populations naturally. All the hard work must be paying off, say NatureWatch coordinators at the fish-watching trail: "Every year we count more fish returning, and more visitors too!"

### *International Migratory Bird Day, Manti-LaSal National Forest, Utah*

The second Saturday in May 1993 was the Western Hemisphere's first annual International Migratory Bird Day, and folks in Moab, Utah, were celebrating. The Manti-LaSal National Forest, together with Canyonlands Field Institute and Utah, Partners in Flight, put on a party to honor migrating birds. Besides singing the birds' praises, organizers hoped to make people aware of the alarming decline of the "neotropicals"—those species that breed in North America and winter in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Speakers offered ways to alleviate pressure on the birds by working for habitat conservation abroad, and by actually creating more habitat here at home. Visitors learned, for instance, how they might landscape their backyards to attract and support wildlife.

Newcomers to bird watching learned the basics and then tested their wings in the bird-rich riparian habitats next to desert canyons. Children learned about birds through games, crafts, and by painting their faces to resemble their favorite species. Finally, a visit to Canyonlands Raptor Center allowed everyone to admire live birds of prey and learn about their migration habits. Our goal, say organizers, is to encourage people to "soar into action" to help conserve bird habitat, and then to show them how.

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Intermountain Region*

Wildflower talks and walks top the list of activities hosted by national forests in Region 4. In 1994, the Wasatch-Cache welcomed over 110 wildflower fans, the Salmon over 400, and the Humboldt over 350. Partners included the Idaho Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Native Plant Society, Red Butte Gardens & Arboretum, and Utah Native Plant Society. One talk focused on how geology influences the kinds of wildflowers you'll see. Another explained how pioneers and Native Americans in the area used the plants, while another focused on the "Legends and Lore of Wildflowers." The talks usually included a field trip on which beginners and experts alike were able to see native plants, often seen nowhere else, flourishing in the "ark" of the national forests.

## **Pacific Southwest Region**

### *Bird Watching at Chilao Visitor Center, Angeles National Forest, California*

For 3,500 kids from Los Angeles, the bird watching garden at Chilao Visitor's Center is a chance to turn down the city noise and slip into a more melodious world. Many hard-to-find birds are attracted to the site, thanks to the native vegetation plantings, annual wildflower seedings, and the mineral licks, bird feeders, and bird houses strategically placed around the garden. The sanctuary, with its barrier-free nature trail and wildlife teaching materials, was completed





with funds from the Big Anita Canyon Historical Society and the help of volunteers from Los Angeles

County Department of Probation, the Boy Scouts, and local communities.

### *Taylor Creek Viewing Bridge and Stream Profile Chamber, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California*

When does a viewing site double as a habitat conservation tool? When it protects the area from being loved to death. The salmon viewing bridge at Taylor Creek, "spawnsored" by the California Tahoe Conservancy and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, allows visitors of all physical abilities to watch spawning salmon without disturbing the banks, which were beginning to erode under the feet of hundreds who once scrambled down to catch the action. Now those visitors can get nose-to-nose with aquatic life without disturbing them, thanks to an underground stream profile chamber with a 30-foot window into "Life in the Fast Lane." A few steps away is the Taylor Creek Meadow Wildlife Viewing Deck, offering panoramic views of the meadow, the surrounding mountain peaks, Lake Tahoe, and a parade of nesting geese, red and yellow-headed blackbirds, osprey, deer, and other mammals.

No wonder 120,000 people stop by each year, including thousands of school children who learn about stream ecology through the Kokanee Salmon Education Program. Funding for the educational program is raised by the annual Kokanee Salmon Festival, a celebration to welcome the colors of fall and the spawning salmon. Locals say the festival, complete with bluegrass music and a greeting from "Sammy the Salmon," is not to be missed!

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Pacific Southwest Region*

Some places are so rich in plant diversity that they invite celebration. Carpinteria Botanic Area on the Sierra National Forest, and Trumbull Peak Botanic Area on the Stanislaus are two such places. Both forests hosted field trips to these areas led by a native plant authority. The Los Padres National Forest offered four different field trips, each one exploring a separate habitat type with its own constellation of flowers and native plants. Those who wanted to plant their own Botanic Area learned how at one of the Region 5 native gardening seminars. For younger audiences (and some adults who wouldn't admit it), wildflower coloring books offered a fun way to learn the anatomy and field marks of the State's most beautiful flowers. This past year, the Plumas National Forest created seven different coloring books that, legend has it, walked out the door by the hundreds.

### **Pacific Northwest Region**

#### *Na-sik-elt River Discovery Program, Wenatchee National Forest, Washington*

Have you tried Gyotaku? You can give it a whirl at the famous Wenatchee River Salmon Festival, a 4-day event that attracts 13,000 people to the National Fish Hatchery in Leavenworth, Washington, to celebrate the return of the salmon. Gyotaku, the art of Japanese fish printing, is only one of many ways that visitors learn about the salmon's anatomy, life cycle, place in the ecosystem, and importance to native cultures. They can travel a nature

trail, learn about predators in a salmon maze, play the web of life, or listen to Native Americans tell ancient fish stories.

Edu-tainment, for both adults and children, is the whole idea behind the festival. Forest Service



education coordinator Susan Thomas chooses the 40 exhibitors carefully, making sure each has an educational component that fits with the curricula she designed to precede and follow the festival. A traveling trunk, a "teach the teachers" workshop, and a published directory of interpretive materials and field trips allow the learning to continue all year long. Thanks to an enthusiastic coalition of 80 environmental education leaders organized by Thomas, 40,000 students in the area are growing up proud of the ecology and natural heritage of their bioregion.

*Puget Sound Eyes on Wildlife Program, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Olympic National Forests, Washington*

A love and concern for wildlife was the common bond that brought the Forest Service together with their one-time appellants, this time to create a comprehensive program for viewing wildlife on national forests in Seattle's backyard. Two Audubon chapters, the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Olympic National Forests, and the Washington Department of Wildlife formed a steering committee that lent vision and quality control to the effort.

The year fairly crackled with activity: hiring and supervising a coordinator, selecting an advisory committee, and, most importantly, signing agreements with 25 partners who brought \$60,000 and a world of expertise to the program. By year's end, over 15 watchable wildlife projects were flourishing on each forest, including an interpretive trail that celebrates saltwater ecosystems, a floodplain ecology interpretation site, a mountain loop auto tour in the North Cas-

cades, and a mountain goat viewing site. Incredible!

Not a group to let the moss grow under their feet, the Puget Sound

group is seeking partners and funding for many more sites, and hoping to add an environmental education arm to the program. Their energy is equaled only by their expansive vision for the program: "That all people will understand wildlife and wildlife habitat relationships and assume personal responsibility for wildlife conservation."

*Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Pacific Northwest Region*

One hike on a lush mountain glade trail, knee-deep in wildflowers, is enough to convince anyone that wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest are a treasure. But how do you convince people to venture out? Region 6 botanists have extended invitations in a number of enterprising ways. Fred Meyer stores printed wildflower drawings on hundreds of thousands of grocery bags; boxloads of coloring books (with follow-the-numbers coloring instructions) were distributed free to schools; "Color Them Forever" coloring contests were held; T-shirts, hats, and key rings were made; brochures and a "Biodiversity in Bloom" poster were printed; wildflower festivals were born; bloom alerts were posted and advertised on the radio and in newspapers; displays were hung in malls, nursery openings, fairs, libraries, gymnasias, and even in a truck stop on Deadman's Pass. Another secret was to offer a multitude of guided tours, slide shows, and workshops—one schedule of events had 25 activities in 1 week, one to fit into everyone's schedule.

This kind of dedication takes time (much of it volunteer, even among Forest Service staff) and funds, which come from business sponsors, communities, other agencies, and individuals in the form of in-kind contributions. This sort of genuine enthusiasm piques interest among everyone it touches, and once piqued, that interest may grow into a lifelong love affair and protective feeling for America's native plants. The botanists in Region 6, knowing full well how tenuous a hold many of these species have, are glad to have company in their campaign to protect wild plants.



Photo credit: Swanson



## Southern Region

### *Teachers' Workshops, Introduction to Tennessee's Watchable Wildlife, Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee*

Tennessee just gained 81 new classrooms, and to the kids' delight, they are all outside. Watchable wildlife sites are great places for young visitors to catch the scent of excitement involved in wildlife viewing. Once they're hooked, they're ready to absorb an enduring message about the links between wildlife, the environment, and people. Wildlife Biologist Laura Mitchell on the Cherokee National Forest made sure they'd receive that message by putting together a "teaching the teachers" program that helped science educators incorporate environmental education into their field trips to the State's watchable wildlife sites. The project was made possible with Forest Service

Natural Resource Conservation Education program dollars and Federal Eisenhower funds. The 9 full days of training took place at both urban and rural sites,

and hundreds of teachers left with a Wildlife Viewing Guide and a curricula of 66 activities—each designed to dovetail with Tennessee's science requirements. Here's a great model for other States trying to use the watchable wildlife sites for hands-on science learning.

### *Conasauga River Underwater Viewing Site, Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee*

Save that plane fare to Belize! Bring your snorkel down to Conasauga, Tennessee, and swim among colorful and unusual fish species in their home waters. Springing from the rain-soaked slopes of the Southern Appalachians, this relatively silt-free stretch of the Conasauga State Scenic River supports over 60 fish species, many of them rare

or endangered, including the Federally-listed blue shiner, amber darter, and Conasauga logperch, as well as the State-listed trispot and coldwater darters. An exceptionally diverse community of mussels is also present (and they are guaranteed not to dart away). Visitors snorkeling in still, deep pools or shallow riffles may slip by stripe-neck musk turtles, redeye bass, sunfish, Alabama hogsuckers, stonerollers, and male darters in breeding color. Interpretive materials designed by

Forest Service staff are available to help visitors identify the residents, and realize how special, and potentially fragile, their river habitat is. Future cooperators for this ground-breaking effort are the Conservation Fisheries and the Tennessee Aquarium.

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Festival, Sam Houston National Forest, Texas*

People in San Jacinto, Texas, still haven't stopped talking about the raw bethany tubers, boiled cattail spikes, and peppergrass they supped at the first annual Celebrating Wildflowers Festival at Double Lake Recreation Area on the Sam Houston National Forest. While their yaupon tea was steeping, folks visited displays from the United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Mercer Arboretum, Quality Environments (an environmentally-friendly pest control company), and others. They admired watercolor paintings of endangered wildflowers, and learned how to make their own art in a 3-hour photography workshop with Houston photographer and orchid expert Joe Liggio. To work off their meal, they took one of the hourly wildflower walks, led by several well-known Houston botanists and volunteers from the Mercer Arboretum, the State Forest Service, and Sam Houston State University. The 100



Photo credit: J. R. Shute

Photo credit: Laura Mitchell





people who stopped by that day are sure to visit the Sam Houston again, this time with their eyes on the forest floor, hoping for a glimpse of an orchid or a fragrant yaupon plant.

## Eastern Region

### *Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Michigan*



A winter in the Bahamas would do most of us a world of good. But it's not been enough to keep the Kirtland's warbler population from declining to fewer than 1,000 birds. When breeding pairs head north in the summer, they need young

jack pine stands on sandy soils. Frequent fires in northern Michigan once supplied acres of this age class, but no more. Today, the prescribed fires and timber harvests used to restart the successional clock also ignite controversy. The question for local managers has become, "How can we build public support for the costly programs needed to stabilize Kirtland's populations?"

A team of local homeowners, industry representatives, the Forest Service, and other agencies got together and brainstormed, dreaming up and then developing a 100-mile auto tour that invites people to see ruffed grouse, wild turkey, beavers, eagles, and if they're lucky, the Kirtland's warbler itself. The tour has awakened a fresh awareness of the warbler's plight, and an awareness of what agencies must do, by law, to keep endangered species alive. It's also created a recreation opportunity that brings tourists to the area for a few days. In a wonderful twist, what began as a recovery process for an endangered species has turned into a recovery process for the local economy!

### *Salmon Watching, Huron-Manistee National Forests, Michigan*

Autumn in northern Michigan means a colorburst of leaves, a few early snowflakes, and the return of the mighty salmon. Thousands of chinook and coho salmon leave Lake Michigan and run up the rivers that drain the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Weighing 20 pounds or more, these fish are easy to see as they stage up on spawning beds in the clear waters of the Au Sable, Manistee, Big Sable, Pere Marquette, White, and Muskegon rivers. High banks are prime vantage points for watching groups of these mythic fish stir the spawning riffles, passing the baton to the next generation. Visitors wishing to see how chinook salmon populations are enhanced can take one of the tours offered at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources spawn-taking facility on the Little Manistee River.

### *Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Eastern Region*

Sometimes the best way to learn how to identify a wildflower is to see one growing among hundreds of its own kind. That's just what you'll see if you stop by the Loda Wildflower Sanctuary in Michigan's Huron-Manistee, or the wildflower gardens in Elkins, West Virginia, or the Cheat District of the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. The sanctuaries include: hummingbird havens, mesic forest edges, dryland prairie wildflowers, bird and butterfly buffets, and a "conservation mix" garden. As the seasons pass, signs in the gardens will help wildflower aficionados track the changes, and thereby learn which flowers to be on the lookout for in the wild. To learn more about their favorite flowers during "Celebrating Wildflowers" week, forest visitors can listen to a radio program featuring the "Wildflower of the Day," with a commentary on the plant's ecology, conservation, ethnobotany, and lore. To keep forest wildflowers in people's minds even when the plants aren't in bloom, the Missouri Botanical Garden is housing an exhibit on the Forest Service's rare and endangered

plant program. Visitors can also peruse pictures of the "experimental prairie" that is a joint project of the Forest Service and the Shaw Arboretum.



## Alaska Region

### *Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival, Chugach National Forest, Alaska*

It's no surprise that people flock to see bald eagles on the Missouri or sandhill cranes on the Platte, but who would guess that tiny sandpipers would have their day on stage? That's exactly what's happening in Cordova, Alaska. It all began with an \$8,000 grant for rural community development, meant to revitalize a small town sagging under a stalled fishing market and Exxon Valdez damage. It turned into the Cordova Shorebird Festival, a week-long welcome for wheeling clouds of 20 million western sandpipers and dunlins that stop over each year before heading for their breeding grounds farther north. Each day at high tide, binoculars are raised, and people from all over the country watch the frenzied feeding of the largest congregation of these birds in the world.

What was once a purely local salute to the passing of the long dark winter has turned into a Mardi Gras of birding. One year, the festival was covered by CNN and Charles Kuralt, and even got a mention on TV's Northern Exposure. No one in town can help but be involved—consider, for instance, that the events schedule, printed by the Chamber of Commerce, is 25-pages long, filled with seminars, guided tours, children's programs, a dinner cruise, and even a name-that-birdcall contest on the local radio station. In town, a parade of tiny

sandpipers appear on almost every shop and cafe window, handpainted by a local artist. The festival logo (a bird in the center of a sextant) is for sale on T-shirts and mugs in every store, from the hardware to the hairdresser.



It took a flock of cooperators to get this festival off the ground, including Alaska Marine Highway system, Prince William Sound's Community College, Science Center, and Tourism Coalition, the Cordova school district, Anchorage Audubon, British Petroleum, Alaska Airlines, and more. As festival organizers from Cordova Ranger Station put it, "The shorebird festival serves as a model of what a small, isolated community can accomplish when Federal, State, and local governments, private businesses, and organizations join hands to achieve a common goal. If Cordova, Alaska, can do it, you can too!"

### *Suntaheen Creek Fish Habitat Improvement Interpretive Site, Tongass National Forest, Alaska*

Time freezes solid when a salmon breaks loose from the water and jumps, jeweled and muscular, to the next stop on a fishpass ladder. From the viewing platform above Suntaheen Creek, the drama unfolds in full view, giving visitors a glimpse of the lesser known side of the salmon fishery industry. After watching spawning, reading about the need for fishpasses, and learning about the coho salmon's life history, visitors come away with a different understanding of the fish and the industry that underpins Alaska's economy.

Like all fish enhancement projects, this one's got a two-headed message. On the one hand, it shows how humans are helping an imperiled species complete its life cycle. On the other hand, it shows how a paucity of clean watersheds have made it necessary for us to open alternative streams to fish through enhancement efforts. The enhancement in Chatham, though organized by the Forest Service, is truly a community effort. Volunteers from the Student Conservation Association built the fishladders and weirs; Alaska Pulp and Whitestone Logging donated labor and equipment to build the access loop road, parking area, and main viewing platform; and Alaska's Department of Fish and Game helps monitor fish populations while the Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association raises salmon fry, the next generation to break loose and fly.

### **Celebrating Wildflowers Roundup, Alaska**

Using native plants—for healing, weaving, dyemaking, or food—is an art that shouldn't be lost. Forest Service botanists agree and in Alaska, they have arranged for practitioners to teach classes in traditional plant lore. At the ferry terminal in Ketchikan, a display of wildflowers explains traditional uses as well as the ecology of plant communities native to the area. Walks in the muskeg are held throughout the summer and are a popular way to see some of the native plants that were so important to tribal cultures.

## **Making Tracks Tomorrow**

Looking back, we believe NatureWatch succeeded because the premise was sound, the public was behind us, our partners rolled up their sleeves, and our coworkers ventured across disciplines to make magic happen.

We've built momentum and a lot of goodwill over the years, covering ground we never thought we'd reach. We've shown that wildlife appreciation and its corollary—habitat appreciation—is the keystone to understanding ecosystem management. We've moved from a focus on single species, such as megavertebrates and game species, to a more inclusive and subtler awareness of all life forms. With that foundation, we're looking forward to the work ahead, including more than 850 sites we'll be creating, completing, or improving in fiscal year 1995 alone. We invite you to keep track of our progress, or even better, to get involved in NatureWatch in your own area. With your help, NatureWatch is bound to be "worth the watching."





To find out more about how you can be a partner in this exciting effort, write to your local Forest Service office.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits the discrimination in its program on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases may apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-5881 or (202) 720-7808 (TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call (202) 720-7327 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY



1022401374